

**AMENDMENT B**  
(37 C.F.R. 1.111)

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Please cancel Claims 7-8 without disclaimer to their content and without prejudice to their subsequent reintroduction into this or a future patent application.

Please add new claims 9-16.

The claims are attached herein on separate sheets.

## **AMENDMENT TO CLAIMS**

1.-6. (Previously canceled)

7.-8. (Canceled)

9. (New) An apparatus for continuously producing baked long doctor materials

comprising:

a plurality of pinch rollers for continuously forwardly straightening out long doctor materials plated from a take-up reel;

means for degreasing the long doctor materials;

means for rinsing the long doctor materials;

means for immersing the long doctor materials in an acid immersion solution;

second rinsing means for rinsing the long doctor materials;

means for electroless ceramic composite nickel plating of the long doctor materials;

means for collecting plating solution after the long doctor materials has been plated;

third rinsing means for rinsing the plated long doctor materials; and

means for drying the rinsed plated long doctor materials, wherein said drying is done between a first step of supplying continuously a long doctor blade base material held on a material reel spirally while the blade surface is maintained in a horizontal direction with respect to the surface of the solution for uniformly plating the long doctor blade material wherein a higher concentration of a ceramic fine powder is deposited on a top surface of the long doctor blade material than a concentration of the ceramic fine powder deposited on the lower surface of the long doctor blade material, and a final step of taking up continuously the blade base material on the corresponding take-up reel while the blade base material is cramped by a plurality of pinch rolls; and

a straightening furnace for baking through which the straightened plated blades pass.

10. (New) The apparatus according to claim 9, wherein

the means for degreasing the long doctor materials includes a degreasing treatment tank;

the means for rinsing the long doctor materials includes a rinsing treatment tank;

the means for immersing the long doctor materials in an acid immersion solution includes an acid immersion treatment tank;

the second rinsing means for rinsing the long doctor materials includes a second rinsing treatment tank;

the means for electroless ceramic composite nickel plating of the long doctor materials includes an electroless ceramic composite nickel plating treatment tank;

the means for collecting plating solution after the long doctor materials has been plated includes a plating solution collection treatment tank;

the third rinsing means for rinsing the plated long doctor materials includes a third rinsing treatment tank; and

the means for drying the rinsed plated long doctor materials includes a drying treatment tank, between the material reel and the take-up reel.

11. (New) The apparatus according to claim 10, further comprising a space tank disposed between each of the degreasing and rinsing treatment tanks, the rinsing and acid immersion treatment tanks, the acid immersion and the second rinsing treatment tanks, the second rinsing treatment tank and the electroless ceramic composite nickel plating treatment tank, the electroless ceramic composite nickel plating treatment tank and the plating solution

collection treatment tank, the plating solution collection treatment tank and the third rinsing treatment tank, and the third rinsing treatment tank and the drying treatment tank.

12. (New) The apparatus according to claim 11, further comprising a partition plate between each of said space tanks and each respective adjoining treatment tank, each partition plate having a slit portion through which the long doctor blade materials can pass.

13. (New) An apparatus for continuously producing baked long doctor materials comprising:

a plurality of pinch rollers for continuously forwardly straightening out long doctor materials plated from a take-up reel;

means for degreasing the long doctor materials;

means for rinsing the long doctor materials;

means for immersing the long doctor materials in an acid immersion solution;

second rinsing means for rinsing the long doctor materials;

means for electroless ceramic composite nickel plating of the long doctor materials;

means for collecting plating solution after the long doctor materials has been plated;

third rinsing means for rinsing the plated long doctor materials; and

means for drying the rinsed plated long doctor materials, wherein said drying is done between a first step of supplying continuously a plurality of long doctor blade base materials held on a plurality of material reels spirally while the blade surfaces are maintained in a horizontal direction with respect to the surface of the solution and a predetermined interval therebetween is maintained for uniformly plating the plurality of long doctor blade materials wherein a higher

concentration of a ceramic fine powder is deposited on a top surface of each of the plurality of long doctor blade materials than a concentration of the ceramic fine powder deposited on the lower surface of each of the plurality of long doctor blade materials, and a final step of taking up continuously the plurality of doctor blade base materials on a plurality of corresponding take-up reels while the plurality of blade base materials are cramped by a plurality of pinch rolls; and a straightening furnace for baking through which the straightened plated blades pass.

14. (New) The apparatus according to claim 13, wherein

- the means for degreasing the long doctor materials includes a degreasing treatment tank;
- the means for rinsing the long doctor materials includes a rinsing treatment tank;
- the means for immersing the long doctor materials in an acid immersion solution includes an acid immersion treatment tank;
- the second rinsing means for rinsing the long doctor materials includes a second rinsing treatment tank;
- the means for electroless ceramic composite nickel plating of the long doctor materials includes an electroless ceramic composite nickel plating treatment tank;
- the means for collecting plating solution after the long doctor materials has been plated includes a plating solution collection treatment tank;
- the third rinsing means for rinsing the plated long doctor materials includes a third rinsing treatment tank; and
- the means for drying the rinsed plated long doctor materials includes a drying treatment tank, between the material reels and the take-up reels.

15. (New) The apparatus according to claim 14, further comprising a space tank disposed between each of the degreasing and rinsing treatment tanks, the rinsing and acid immersion treatment tanks, the acid immersion and the second rinsing treatment tanks, the second rinsing treatment tank and the electroless ceramic composite nickel plating treatment tank, the electroless ceramic composite nickel plating treatment tank and the plating solution collection treatment tank, the plating solution collection treatment tank and the third rinsing treatment tank, and the third rinsing treatment tank and the drying treatment tank.

16. (New) The apparatus according to claim 15, further comprising a partition plate between each of said space tanks and each respective adjoining treatment tank, each partition plate having a plurality of parallel slit portions through which the plurality of long doctor blade materials can pass.